



Effective Listening Helpcard – Listening Skills

Skill	Description	Use When	Example
Openers	A comment or question to encourage the person to speak.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You first meet the person You are trying to get the person to speak. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are you today? You seem... I notice that...
Silence	Being quiet, refraining from speaking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The client needs space to think and process information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Minimal Encourages	Brief verbal or non-verbal expressions that lets the speaker know you are listening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the person is sharing a story or information with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A-ha, Uh-mm, Yes, Ok, I see Nodding your head
Pace & Tone	Pace is the speed of speech. Tone is the pitch of your speech. Matching the person's tone and pitch can help them to feel heard and understood. In cases where the person is highly agitated or aggressive, it is appropriate to use a neutral tone and a slower pace of speech to bring calm into the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person is particularly excited or depressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow pace and low tone when the person is depressed or sad Fast pace and high tone when the person is excited. Neutral tone and pace when a person is highly agitated or aggressive.
Paraphrasing	Rewording the content of what a person has told you allows the person to feel heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the person has shared a story or information with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What I am hearing you say is.. Sounds like you
Reflecting Feelings	Identifying and expressing the feeling behind the words that a person speaks which allows them to feel understood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At regular intervals throughout the conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You were angry when.. You must be feeling.... You are happy and excited...
Summarising	Rewording the key points of a long conversation to provide clarity and focus. It links important parts of the person's story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person has shared a lot of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have spoken about a number of things today, it sounds like the key areas of concern for you are....
Normalising	Letting the person know that their thoughts, feeling or actions in a particular situation are normal helping him/her to accept the situation and move forward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a person is distressed by their reaction to the situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone in your situation would be as frustrated as you are now. Others who have experienced this agree...
Reframing	Noting some positive aspects of a person's situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person has a narrow and negative view of a situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although you feel you are destitute you still have friends who want to help you.
Focusing	Helping a person who is overwhelmed with a number of problems to focus on the most pressing one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person keeps talking about a number of issues and is becoming overwhelmed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have a lot going on for you right now, what do you think is the most important thing to focus on right now?
Questioning	Asking a person to provide information to encourage further sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When information is required to further the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closed question: Did you enjoy the party? Open question: Tell me about the party?



Effective Listening Helpcard – Be aware of...

Pitfalls when Listening		Body Language that Encourages Discussion	
Me-too-isms	Sharing that you have experienced the event takes the focus of the conversation away from the person, e.g., <i>“that happened to me too, but my situation was worse.”</i>	Squarely face the person	This communicates that you are there for the person.
Moralising	Making a judgemental comment on a person’s behaviour or feelings, e.g., <i>“why did you do a stupid thing like that?”</i>	Matching facial expressions	Matching the person’s facial expressions powerfully communicates your interest in them, e.g., looking sombre when a person is crying, shows that you are aware of their sorrow.
Curiosity	Asking a question to satisfy your own curiosity, e.g., <i>“how did the person die?”</i>	Open posture	Avoid crossing arms and/or legs which communicates a closed or defensive stance.
Giving advice	Telling the person how they are to solve the problem, e.g., <i>“you should do such and such.”</i>	Lean forward	Leaning slightly towards the person communicates that you are listening and with the person. Leaning back can suggest a lack of interest or boredom.
Cheap consolation	Pitying the person with a general comment, e.g., <i>“you poor thing, you have really been through a tough time.”</i>	Maintain appropriate eye contact	Keeping regular eye contact lets the person know you are attending to them. Staring can make the person feel uncomfortable while avoiding eye contact can communicate that you are not interested.
Arguing	Disagreeing or fighting with the listener, e.g., <i>“no you are wrong, let me tell you how it really is.”</i>	Nodding	Regular nodding tells the person you are still with them and encourages them to keep talking
Analysing	Interpreting the speaker’s comments, e.g., <i>what you are trying to say is...</i>	Relaxing	Nervous fidgeting may cause the person to feel uncomfortable and want to escape the interaction
Ignoring heavy emotions	Making no comment when a person is tearful, highly frustrated or angry.	Good listening is a discipline... It requires lots of practise, discipline and being willing to be involved in the other person’s feelings!	
Directing/leading	Controlling what the other person can or can’t speak about.		
Interrogating	Asking endless amounts of questions about a situation.		
Humouring	Trying to make a person feel better by using humour or making light of the conversation.		
Labelling	Diagnosing a person from what they tell you, e.g., <i>“you have an anxiety disorder.”</i>		